

## Wildfires and Air Quality – Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) How do we measure the quality of the air?

Answer: The air quality is measured by the Air Quality Index (AQI) - whose meaning is best summarized below:

Index Value	Color	Level of Health Concern
301 - 500	Dark Purple	Hazardous
201 - 300	Purple	Very Unhealthy
151 - 200	Red	Unhealthy
101 - 150	Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
51 - 100	Yellow	Moderate
0 - 50	Green	Good

### 2) How can I find out what the current Air Quality is Right Now?

Answer:

Option 1 - many people have 'weather related' apps on their smart phone, and they can provide you with the current AQI number. I've currently verified that Apple's weather App, and the "Weather Channel" apps report an AQI measurement. There are likely many other apps that do the same.

Option 2 – you can visit the EPA website: <https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow/>

Option 3 – you can visit the NJ DEP website:  
<https://www.airnow.gov/state/?name=new-jersey> (we are in the "north central" reporting area, measured in Mendham )

### 3) I'm trying to make plans... is it possible to anticipate what the AQI will be?

Answer: It is somewhat difficult to predict, as much is dependent upon weather systems, wind speed, and the wildfire(s) constantly changing attributes.

That said, the EPA and others do attempt to make a forecast. The best view I've found is on the airnow website, at the link below.

- Directions for getting the "Overall forecast". See link [here](#)
  - Go to Forecast tab
  - In contours, select either: today or tomorrow.

(the link above is custom built to zoom into NJ so use it, rather than navigate yourself. Works best on a computer as opposed to your phone. Note if for some reason the above link is not working you can simply go to <https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow> and build your own view.)

#### 4) Just how bad is this for me and my family?

Answer: There are many factors that affect any one person (pre-existing conditions, exact exposure, etc.) Bottomline, call 9-1-1 for emergencies, and see a medical health professional if you have concerns.

For the overwhelming majority, it is hard to imagine that there will be significant affects, as wildfires occur all over the country/world everyday, and there aren't immediate/large-scale issues.

That said, for a general take, see these 2 helpful EPA resources:

##### 1. To Get a Sense of the impacts by AQI color... see this chart provided by the EPA:

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution			
Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 to 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

See link at: <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics>

##### 2. To see the “Air Quality Guide for Particle Pollution” for sensitive populations:

[https://www.airnow.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/air-quality-guide-for-particle-pollution\\_0.pdf](https://www.airnow.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/air-quality-guide-for-particle-pollution_0.pdf)